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THE STORY OF COLUMBUS

TICKNOR & FIELDS
BOSTON





ROBERT, HOOPER & CO., N. Y.

THE STORY
OF
COLUMBUS.

BY
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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALFRED FREDERICKS,

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THE STORY OF COLUMBUS.

COLUMBUS AND HIS LITTLE SON DIEGO.

A WAY-WORN man in Spanish lands,
He wanders by the sea ;—
And by his side a little lad :
“ O Father ! why are we so sad ?
Why don't you speak to me ?

“ All day the silent ships go by,
The long waves wash the shore.
I 'm weary of the silent ships !
The salt waves mock my thirsty lips ;—
I 'm weary of their roar !

“ Along the sky the ships go by,
But never one comes near.
So soft and slow, like ghosts they go !
They must be ghosts, or else I know
They would not leave us here !

“ I think the ships would pity us,
If ships could understand !—
Why did we leave our quiet home,
In the grand old pleasant town, to roam
Like beggars through the land ?

“ O, Lisbon was a pleasant town !
Till now I never knew
How cool and sweet was our fair street,
And the window, shaded from the heat,
Where the fresh sea-breezes blew !—

“ The window of your little room,
Where many a day I stood
For hours, and watched you, while you drew
The charts which every captain knew,
The maps we sold for food.

“ Was it those wondrous maps that put
Such dreams into your mind,
Of some strange country, far away,
Beyond the ocean, which some day
You mean to sail and find ?

“ Those dreams have made us sad and poor ;
Your hair has turned to gray ;
And, sometimes, when you look at me,
Your eyes are strange,—they seem to see
That strange world far away !

“ O Father ! I 'm so tired to-night,”
The little wanderer said,
“ That world, and all the things that live
Or grow upon it, I would give
Just for a little bread !”

A tear was in the father's eye,
But his heart was strong and great :
“ For thy dear sake, my child, I yearn
To be at rest, but we must learn
To suffer and to wait.”

COLUMBUS AND THE PRIOR.

Dreary and brown the night comes down,
Gloomy, without a star.
On Palos town the night comes down ;
The day departs with stormy frown ;
The sad sea moans afar.

A convent gate is near : 't is late :
Ting-ling ! the bell they ring.
They ring the bell, they ask for bread ; —
"Just for my child," the father said.
Kind hands the bread will bring.

White was his hair, his mien was fair,
His look was calm and great.
The porter ran and called a friar ;
The friar made haste and told the prior ;
The prior came to the gate.

He took them in, he gave them food ;
The traveller's dreams he heard ;
And fast the midnight moments flew,
And fast the good man's wonder grew,
And all his heart was stirred.

The child the while, with soft, sweet smile,
Forgetful of all sorrow,
Lay soundly sleeping in his bed :
The good man kissed him there, and said :
"You leave us not to-morrow !

"I pray you, rest the convent's guest.
This child shall be our own, —
A precious care, while you prepare
Your business with the court, and bear
Your message to the throne."

And so his guest he comforted ; —
O wise, good prior ! to you,
Who cheered the stranger's darkest days,
And helped him on his way, what praise
And gratitude are due !

BEFORE THE KING AND QUEEN OF SPAIN.

With heart elate, at the convent gate.
The father kissed his boy.
He kissed the child, he kissed the prior.
And sallied forth in sad attire,
Upon his errand of joy.

King Ferdinand, august and grand,
Sat in his royal chair.
Beside him, gracious and serene,
Sat Isabel, his famous Queen,
As wise as she was fair.

Now, after many wanderings
Through long and weary years,
Amidst a court of proud Castilians,
Before the sovereigns of millions,
The traveller appears.

Unknown to fame, and poor, he came ; —
The courtiers veiled their laughter.
He stooped to kiss each royal robe ;
While, stoutly bearing chart and globe,
A little page came after.

The crafty king, with courtly smile,
That scarce concealed his scorn,
Inquired his name, and whence he came.
He said : "Columbus is my name ;
In Genoa was I born.

"And many voyages have I made,
And cities visited ;
In many countries have I been,
And storms and battles have I seen,
And toiled for daily bread.

"But for one greater thing than all,
Heaven marked me from my birth :
Behold ! I bear about with me,
Beneath this garb of poverty,
A pearl of priceless worth.



"I offer it to crownéd heads :
 They scorn the gift sublime !
 But who accepts that slighted gem,
 'T will glitter in his diadem,
 The wonder of all time !

"I offer you a realm, O King !
 O Queen !" He spread his chart,
 And poised the globe. "This world,—'t is round ;
 A part," he said, "is solid ground,
 And rolling seas a part.

"Here Europe lies ; there, Africa ;
 Vast Asia stretches here.
 Look now, what boundless wastes must be
 Beyond, of unknown land or sea,
 To make the perfect sphere !

"*Eastward* it lies ; yet give me ships,
 And crews, at my command,
 Less than a thousand leagues to sail
 Due *westward*, and I shall not fail
 To find that farthest land !

"That new world found, 't is yours ; and yours
 The deathless fame will be
 Of mighty potentates, who first
 Opened the darksome way, and burst
 The barrier of the sea !"

BEFORE THE WISE MEN OF SALAMANCA.

King Ferdinand looked pleased and bland ;
 He called for his wise men.
 Their gowns were black ; their beards were gray ;
 So very old and wise were they,
 Each knew enough for ten.

With grave grimace, they hear the case,
 And globe and chart they handle ;
 And, though the morning was so bright
 Their eyes kept blinking at the light,
 They brought an ancient candle !

They viewed the subject by its beams,
 And pondered and derided it ;
 Then, when their heads were tired of thinking,
 And when their eyes were red with blinking,
 They said : "We have decided it."

Then forth stepped one,—the very sun
 Of wisdom and of knowledge he !
 "This man," he said, "is a deceiver ;—
 'T is plain, he is an unbeliever
 In science and theology."

Then with a frown black as his gown,
 And features fixed and solemn, he
 Condemned the scheme ; "because," he said,
 "Of such things no man ever read
 In Moses or in Ptolemy.

"Surely that man is crazed," quoth he,
 "Who talks of lands that lie
 Far off, beyond the farthest seas,
 Below the world, where men and trees
 Grow *downward* towards the sky !

"I'd like to ask this stranger,—if
 Your Majesties are willing,—
 What keeps the men from falling off?
 And what," he added, with a scoff,
 "Prevents the sea from spilling ?

"And even if such a land exists,
 Far in some unknown deep,
 And he sails down to it, 't is plain,
 He never could sail back again,
 He'd find the world so steep !"

And so the case was judged ; for who
 Would ever think to rank a
 Poor traveller and his dreams before
 The solemn gowns and ancient lore
 Of men of Salamanca ?

Men call him crazed whose eyes are raised
 To look beyond his times ;
 And they are learnéd, who too fast
 Are anchored in the changeless past,
 To seek Truth's newer climes !

Yet act thy part, heroic heart !
 For only by the strong
 Are great and noble deeds achieved ; —
 No truth was ever yet believed
 That had not struggled long.

—
 QUEEN ISABELLA.

Forth from the court Columbus went,
 But lingered near it still
 To urge his suit ; until at last
 Men touched their foreheads, as he passed,
 And nodded, as men will.

Then up spoke good Queen Isabel : —
 Her large heart understood
 The voyager's noble heart and mind ;
 For generous natures know their kind,
 The good discern the good.

"Send hither again that man to me !"
 She heard once more his story ; —
 In that strange tale, with joy and awe,
 As in a morning cloud, she saw
 The new time's rising glory.

"For my own kingdom of Castile,"
 Said she, "this voyage I claim !
 I pledge my jewels for ships and crews,
 And treasure shall be yours to use" ;
 And signed her royal name.

"Your boy shall be my little page,
 And he at court shall stay.
 And now, farewell !" Right thankfully
 He kissed her hand, and forth went he,
 A happy man that day !

THE VOYAGE.

The ships are here at Palos pier.
 Now kiss thy child adieu !
 He kissed the child, he kissed the prior :
 The sails are set : the Saint Maria
 Stands out towards the blue.

Two other craft, light caravels,
 The armament complete : —
 His own good ship, full-decked, though small,
 And two frail, open barks, are all
 The voyager's little fleet.

Away ! away ! across the bay,
 Like sea-birds they go sailing.
 But never a cheer the crews could hear ; —
 From wives and children on the pier
 Went forth a sound of wailing.

"Now woe befall our admiral !"
 The weeping mariners cry.
 "Farewell, farewell, O Mother Spain !
 We shall not see thy shores again !
 He takes us forth to die !"

Three days from port, in freshening gales,
 The Pinta's rudder parted.
 They seek the fair Canaries ; there
 The damaged Pinta they repair.
 Then forth afresh they started.

The fiery peak of Teneriffe
 Glares red on sea and shore.
 It lights them from the fair Canaries ;
 Thence seven days' sail, the needle varies ;
 It points due north no more.

The appalled crews their chief accuse ;
 They fill the ships with groans :
 "Our keels go down to night and chaos,
 Where gulfs will swallow, and monsters slay us,
 And miseries rack our bones !"



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A heron flies past the Nina's mast ;
 Soon floating weeds appear,
 And hovering land-birds they descry :
 "Ha, ha!" the happy mariners cry,
 "The land, the land is near!"

The wind blew ever from the East,
 Until it died away.
 Into a realm of calms they pass,—
 Upon a glistening sea of glass
 The lazy vessels lay.

"This is the Sea of Death!" they said ;
 "And never from this spot,
 Nor to nor fro, our keels will go ;
 Nor seas will ripple, nor breeze will blow,
 But here our hulls will rot!"

Up sprang the breeze, up rose the seas,
 And all the sailors cheered.
 Westerly still, by night and day,
 Where never a prow had found its way,
 The steadfast captain steered.

All looked for land ; and oft at dawn,
 Or on the evening air,
 "Land! land!" rang loud from deck or shroud ;
 But every cliff dissolved in cloud,
 And hope changed to despair.

Then many complain: "Our voyage is vain ;
 We sail a shoreless sea!"
 Some said, "Now let us seize the barks!
 We 'll toss the admiral to the sharks!
 A very madman he!"

The mutineers he chides, or cheers
 With high prophetic words.
 His great soul falters not, nor sleeps :
 More southerly now his course he keeps,
 Following the flight of birds.

Some fresh shore-weeds, and river reeds,
 At last come drifting by,—
 A thorn-branch, and a carved staff:
 The mariners clap their hands and laugh ;—
 Now surely land is nigh!

False as the gales that shook the sails,
 Their fickle spirits veered.
 Still, where no ship had shaped the way,—
 Where the waves are white with fleets to-day,—
 Steadily on he steered!

DISCOVERY OF THE NEW WORLD.

Upon the lonesome deck he keeps
 His watch at dead of night.
 Searching with anxious eyes the dark,
 What sees he far away? a spark,
 A little glimmering light!

Then boomed the Pinta's signal gun!
 The first that ever broke
 The silence of a world. That sound,
 Echoing to savage depths profound,
 A continent awoke!

Wild joy possessed each mariner's breast,
 When day revealed a rich
 And fruitful island, fair and green,
 Where naked savages were seen
 Running along the beach.

The Saint Maria moves proudly up,
 And drops her anchor highest ;
 And "Glory to God!" the sailors sing ;
 With "Glory to God!" the wild winds ring,—
 "Glory to God in the highest!"

The boat is manned, and towards the land
 Swift fly the flashing oars.
 High at the prow the admiral,
 In princely garb, superb and tall,
 Surveys the savage shores.

They touched the strand, he stepped to land,
And knelt and kissed the sod,
With all his followers. Amazed,
Far off the painted red men gazed,
Believing him a god.

Then up rose he, and solemnly,
With bright sword drawn, advanced
The standard of the King and Queen ;—
On its rich sheen of gold and green,
The sunrise glory glanced.

With wondering awe, the red men saw
The silken cross unfurled.
His task was done: for good or ill,
The fatal banners of Castile
Waved o'er the Western World.

RETURN TO SPAIN.

His bark is here, at Palos pier,
Storm-battered, stem and stern ;
And crowds come thronging to the pier,
And wild huzzas, and cheer on cheer,
Welcome his safe return.

With fame, and trophies strange, from lands
New found beyond the sea,
He comes! and never conqueror,
Returning home from glorious war,
Such homage had as he.

The haughty court that scorned him once
Forgot its old disdain.
The sovereigns greet him as a brother,
Or prince more honored than all other,
Who gives a realm to Spain.

THE COURTIER AND THE EGG.

When ships with ease across the seas
His new-found path pursue,
The courtiers slight his service done.
"Why, that was, after all," said one,
"An easy thing to do!"

Said he, "So 't is an easy thing
To cause this egg to stand."
They try, and fail. "Why, look, my lord!"
He said; and lightly on the board
He struck it with his hand.

He breaks the shell, and on the end
It stands upright! Straightway
All try the feat, and all succeed:
"Why, that is easily done, indeed!"
"Yes, when I 've shown the way."

HIS REWARD.

Yet envious hearts and evil tongues
His lonely age pursued;
With treacherous friends his lot was thrown;
For all the harvest he had sown
He reaped ingratitude.

In poverty he died; and half
His heritage of fame
Fell to late voyagers, great and small.
To the new world he gave to all,
Another gave his name!









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